Handilift Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes July 18, 2012

The meeting was held immediately following the ADA Advisory Council in the first floor conference room of the Hood Building, 200 South President Street. Attending today's meeting were: Ms. Lee Cole (ADA Council Chairperson); Dr. Scott Crawford (Handilift Committee Chairperson); Rev. Sam Gleese (City ADA Coordinator); Ms. Traci Brent (City of Jackson Transit Services/ADA Transportation Accessibility Coordinator); Ms. Evelyn Pittman (City of Jackson Transit Services); Mr. Theo Letman (JATRAN's General Manager (PTM)), Mr. Dewayne Cheatham (JATRAN's Head of Operations); Ms. Karen Robinson (JATRAN Handilift Dispatcher); Ms. Gladys Bunzy (JATRAN Fixed Route Advisory Committee, Chairperson); Deputy Chief Lindsey Horton (J.P.D.); Deputy Chief Johnnie L. McDonald (J.F.D.); Mr. Charles Husband (MDOT Public Transit Division); Ms. Shellie Ziegler (MS Library for the Blind); Ms. Mary Bates, Mr. Charles Cool, and Mr. Andre Jarreau, (MILES Corporation); Ms. Ollie Lester (Addie McBryde Rehab Center for the Blind); Mr. Jason Bunch; Mr. Fred Myers; Mr. Willie Cook; Attorney Kay Hardage (DRMS); Ms. Lynn Hill; Mr. Carl Allen (Deputy Director, Planning and Development); and Mr. Desmeon Thomas (LIFE of Mississippi).

The meeting convened at 1:45pm, immediately following the ADA Council.

Approval of Minutes:

Karen Robinson read aloud the minutes from the May 30th meeting. Rev. Gleese motioned that they be adopted as read, seconded by Gladys Bunzy. The vote was unanimous in favor of adopting the minutes as read.

Old Business:

- Official Bylaws The Chairperson (Crawford) indicated that he revised the I. Handilift Advisory Committee Bylaws. The major changes were the name: "Committee" instead of "Council". This was the recommendation to maintain consistency and help differentiate it from the ADA meeting that uses the title "Council". The second change was that the ADA Coordinator appoints the members. Crawford had the number at eight but Rev. Gleese suggested an odd number (nine) to avoid voting ties. Lee Cole suggested that there be more members, perhaps eleven, because it would afford broader representation from more disability groups. All agreed that broad representation is desirable, but Crawford pointed out that having more members lowers the likelihood of getting a quorum on any given day. The consensus was that the official Committee membership be limited to nine, with a quorum being fifty percent plus one, or five. The issue of broader representation is to be addressed by encouraging Handilift riders with various disabilities to attend, especially those with multiple medical conditions (something Ms. Cole indicated was lacking).
- II. Bus Kneeling The chair said that there were still problems with kneeling the fixed route buses when boarding/alighting passengers. Ms. Bunzy said that the

more experienced bus operators that know her personally typically kneel the bus when she boards/alights, but some of the newer ones do not. Still, she said that compliance was near 90%. Crawford indicated that his experience on Route #1 has been different, adding that compliance is hovering near 30-40%. Another rider, Sheila O'Flaherty of the Fixed Route Advisory Committee recently complained about the bus kneeling situation. Mr. Letman said that JATRAN now has a policy REQUIRING operators to kneel the bus at ALL TIMES, adding that he needs specific times/route numbers so that they can discipline the non-compliant operators. Ms. Bunzy suggested that reporting would be easier if JATRAN posted name plaques in the slots at the front of the bus. Mr. Cheatham said that he would take care of that.

- III. Secret Rider Program Crawford asked if there was any progress to report on a "secret rider program" in which bus operator conduct (including kneeling compliance) could be monitored anonymously. Mr. Letman said that they have a couple of people they can use, but that the program costs money. He said he will look into using the program to more accurately measure compliance.
- IV. Taxicab Access Crawford said he used Veteran's Cab several weeks ago and received excellent service. The driver was right on time, arrived with an accessible van, and got him home. Crawford commented that this is hopefully a trend that will continue, as he plans on using cabs more often in the next year to get to Mississippi Symphony Concerts. Crawford reiterated the ADA Council's recommendation that the City require a certain percentage of taxicabs to be wheelchair accessible.
- V. Ordering New Paratransit Buses Ms. Brent indicated that the plan is to look into ordering four buses for FY2013 with the fold away seating style used in Nashville. This allows complete flexibility in positioning wheelchair users in the bus and configuring the bus to carry as many or as few wheelchair users as needed. Rev. Gleese indicated that positioning wheelchair users farther forward in the bus will reduce unwanted shocks that can harm people with various medical conditions.

New Business:

I. Planning for Increasing Handilift Usage – JATRAN Monitor Russell Thatcher's most recent report indicated a thirty percent increase in Handilift usage since instituting the new Handilift runs in January. Mr. Thatcher's most recent report recommends a more formal method of estimating future demand for Handilift service. Thatcher indicated in his May, 2012 Annual Report, that without additional funding, that there would likely be insufficient funds to operate the new Handilift buses now on order. Mr. Letman indicated that their current numbers show Handilift usage up 21% from this time last year, and that there will be sufficient funds to operate the new Handilift buses when they arrive, beginning in FY 2013.

Charles Husband of MDOT Public Transit Division said that he discussed the possibility of adding to Handilift capacity by leveraging unused vehicle time from other transit providers operating in the area (e.g., Bolivar County Council on Aging). He said there might be ways that vehicle "downtime" can be reallocated to help JATRAN improve its paratransit capacity. He plans on setting up a meeting with JATRAN and Ms. Brent in the near future to discuss options.

II. New Transportation Authorization Law (MAP-21) – Several weeks ago, a new transportation authorization law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the Twenty-First Century, was signed. It will go into effect in October and last twenty-seven months. Crawford indicated that there is a new "100 Bus Rule" which allows smaller transit agencies (like JATRAN) to use FTA funds to help with operating costs (salaries, maintenance, fuel). Heretofore, there was a population limit that disqualified JATRAN from such assistance. Mr. Husband said that MDOT is awaiting guidance from FTA on the particulars of implementing this rule. Crawford expressed hope that JATRAN may qualify for some operating assistance.

Finally, Crawford expressed regret that the new law lowers funding for bike and pedestrian safety programs (e.g., bike lanes, sidewalks), adding, "Transportation is only as good as its weakest link." [Sidewalks and bus stop access are an important part of a complete transportation system].

Announcements: Gladys Bunzy invited City officials and others present to attend the JATRAN Fixed Route Advisory Committee on Saturday, July 28th, in the City Council Chambers (219 South President Street).

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

These Minutes were written by Committee Chairperson, Dr. Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. and approved at the September 19, 2012, meeting.